

MY LOVE IS BLIND

Schmid, Mrs. Al

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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

Marine Sgt. Al Schmid returned from battle

sightless . . . and vowed not to impose on the woman he loved.

Here is her moving story of a problem faced by every

sweetheart of a wounded soldier

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Copy 4

by Mrs. Al Schmid



MY LOVE IS BLIND

"Blindness hasn't licked Al . . . It is hard to believe he is not seeing me, because he acts so normal"

 I KNOW all too well the terrible anxieties which thousands of girls are now feeling when they learn their husbands or boy-friends have been wounded in battle. Those same feelings afflicted me when I heard that Al had been stricken and probably blinded at Guadalcanal.

He was manning a machine gun the night the Japs first tried to cross the Tenaru River. When the Japs were finally stopped, bodies were piled up four feet deep in front of Al's gun. The Marine Corps counted 200 of them. But everyone thought Al was about dead, too,

because a hand grenade had exploded two feet from his face.

The reports that came in were vague and I tried not to imagine what his wounds were. I was all mixed up about what the future held for us now. But there was one thing I did know. Al was my betrothed. I loved him and I wanted him back, no matter how badly he was hurt.

I did get Al back, and finally married him—but only after he had gotten off his high horse about not wanting to be a drag on anybody. He had tried to cut me loose because he felt

he couldn't give me all he had hoped he could give a wife.

The funny thing is that that period of fear seems like a bad dream, now. These past 17 months I've been living with Al in Philadelphia have been the most wonderful 17 months of my life. And, when I say that, I'm not just shooting the breeze, as Al would say.

I had always thought of blindness as the most dreadful thing that could happen to anybody. It seemed to make its victims helpless cripples who groped around without much to live for. Even (Continued on page 122)

BACK BAY BOOGIE

by Paul Stevens



• *Entertaining at the Esplanade Service Club in Boston, the Swing Shifters are led by Investment Counselor Lloyd Thomas*

TWO evenings a week, when the clock on his desk works its way around to 5, Walter McKim adjusts his steel-framed glasses and sheds his years just as Plymouth Rock sheds water. Instead of being Walter M. McKim, president of a million-dollar Boston aircraft parts company, he becomes Walt McKim, leader of a hot dance band called the Swing Shifters.

At the same moment, in various other Boston offices, a Massachusetts Supreme Court Justice is laying aside Blackstone for Downbeat, an investment counselor is abandoning commodity reports for jumping jive, and a Lahey Clinic surgeon is exchanging a scalpel for a bull fiddle.

The Swing Shifters are a group of top-

bracket Boston business and professional men, some of whom have sons in the service, all of whom want to do something for the boys. One evening, about a year ago, at the Badminton and Tennis Club in Boston, a group of the members got the idea that it might be a welcome change to some of the foot-loose G.I.s if they could stomp to live music, without having to pay for it, instead of beating it out via a juke box.

The idea took hold, and at first if the members' efforts smacked of *Dardanella* and *Bambolina*, it wasn't long before they realized that some changes had taken place since their youth, and they set about learning new tunes.

The band varies from 8 to 13 musicians, depending on how many are free to play at

engagement times. State Senator Dick Bowers, who in college was leader of a band called Bowers' Venetian Serenaders, alternates with Banker Walter Robb on the drums. Ed Beckwith, who is president of a plastics company, plays saxophone, an instrument he has had a mash on since he was 16. Howard Trafton, a surgeon at the Lahey Clinic, beats out rhythm on the bass fiddle, and his brother, Edwin, lilts on the violin.

To date the Swing Shifters have played at as many dates as they can fill, which means that they cover greater Boston and play at least one return engagement at each canteen. So far the grind has not hurt any of the boys, even though they play with all the abandon of high-school jivesters in the groove.

My Love is Blind

(Continued from page 45)

when I wrote and told Al that I still wanted to marry him I was resigning myself to be as much a nurse as a wife. I expected that Al would be gloomy, and imagined well-intended neighbors feeling sorry for his poor wife. But I was willing to endure all that if I could only have him back. I suppose that most other women have the same misgivings I had when they learn that their loved ones have been stricken in battle.

Blindness is a cruel affliction, but it certainly hasn't warped or licked Al. I feel happy every time I think how natural, independent, good-humored, and impish he is today. It's fun just to be around him.

The other night when he was leaving to speak at a bond rally he said, "Look me over, Babe. Is my eye in straight?" He asked it just like lots of women ask if their slips show. But Al was clowning, because he knows darned well whether his glass eye is in straight. It feels funny when it isn't.

WHEN Al isn't kidding he's showing off some new scheme to beat his blindness. Yesterday he was figuring how to use our dial telephone. He had a friend in the room reading the dial to him. As you may know, each hole, except the first, contains one or more letters of the alphabet as well as a number. Al was dialing numbers to beat the band. Finally he came out to the kitchen and said triumphantly, "Did you know there is one letter missing on dial phones?"

When I confessed I didn't he challenged me to guess which one it was. I guessed X. "You're wrong," he beamed. "It's Q."

Sometimes when he is showing off I get to laughing so hard I could cry for joy.

Al becomes flustered and annoyed when anyone tries to call him a war hero. (He was awarded the Navy Cross, the Navy's highest decoration for bravery.) But he certainly doesn't mind when I call him "The General." He often acts like one, the way he orders me around.

We first got acquainted back in 1941. Before long we were going steady.

Then came Pearl Harbor! Al quit his job as a burner at a Philadelphia steel company and went right down to the Marines and enlisted. He didn't ask my advice, but I would have said "Go ahead" if he had, even though I felt miserable every time I thought of going on without him.

Once, while back on a 48-hour leave, he dropped hints that he might be shipping out soon. The morning he had to return to camp I asked my boss for time off, because I kept thinking this might be the last time Al and I would see each other for a long time. My boss said no, so I quit the job and went to the station anyway. Everyone was hugging and crying on the platform. Al and I just hugged. I had promised him there would be no blubbing.

Then suddenly we noticed the train was pulling out. Al dived into a window and landed on the lap of a top sergeant. Everybody roared. Al stuck his head out of the window, laughed, and waved good-bye.

That was the last time Al ever saw me.

A few days later I got a little package. It contained an engagement ring and a note which said, "Till I come home—Al."

After two months I received a very brief V-Mail letter saying something about fighting the "slant-eyes."

Then, one day late in September, when I

came home from work, there was a letter on the mantel. I didn't recognize the writing. The letter was seared brown around the edges as if from fire. A feeling of dread swept over me, just as it does with lots of people when they receive a telegram unexpectedly. My hands trembled as I opened it. It began:

"Dear Ruth: Al asked me to write this letter for him, as he has been wounded in battle. I am a sailor and am taking care of him; he is all right and I wouldn't worry about him. I will tell you honestly and truly, tho, he is a HERO, and I do mean HERO. . . ."

I felt numb. What had happened to him? There wasn't even a hint. For two days I went around in a daze.

Then I started writing to Al every day, in care of Postmaster, San Francisco. I can't see how they could have been very cheering letters, since I felt so terrible myself, but I did try to make them "laughing" letters, because I knew that was what Al would want, no matter how badly he was hurt. I racked my mind for funny bits of gossip about people we both knew.

Another month went by. The waiting was agony. Then I received a letter written by a Red Cross worker, Virginia Pfeiffer, at the Naval Hospital, San Diego, Calif. She said that Al had been worrying for a long time whether he should tell me what was wrong with him.

"Today he told me he might as well let you know," she wrote. "He has lost one eye and the other is seriously damaged. The doctors will not know for months whether he will have any sight in that eye. Of course, Al is primarily concerned with what this news will mean so far as you and he are concerned. . . . Your letters and cards mean a lot to him and I enjoy reading them aloud. He's quite a boy, as you already know. . . ."

So he was blinded! I felt sick when I read that. Blindness would kill everything wonderful about Al. How could he ever be gay or mischievous or carefree again, when his world was only blackness?

The letter did hint that he might not lose his sight entirely. I learned later that one eye had been filled with shrapnel while the other had been torn from its socket. And added to that suffering, he was ill from malaria, and from blood poisoning in both legs which was so severe that doctors were debating whether to amputate them.

I WANTED to be with Al immediately, even though he was 3,000 miles away, and sent him an airmail letter telling him so, and telling him that I loved him and always would. That was the truth.

By return mail I got another letter which I hate to think about even now. Al positively did not want me to come to California, because he thought he looked so dreadful it would hurt me.

Then my world crashed down on me again. Miss Pfeiffer wrote that his legs were worse and the doctors had decided they could do nothing about his eye for a year, at least. Al was really down. She added:

"He wants me to tell you he can't and won't marry you so long as he is unable to see. . . . Men like Al feel they would be a burden and not able to give you all the things they had hoped to have for you some day."

Apparently I had lost, for the time being. I knew I was in for a hard fight to make Al change his mind, for when he started being proud he was tough to handle. But I *had* to



Rodney de Sarro

"I'll take the rap for a dime, Pop"



How to get to next Saturday's game (and in case you don't)



If you're fortunate enough to possess something like an oldtime electro-mobile, your problem is solved. But—even the big game won't tempt many a rooter's car from the garage. For most of us realize that car-miles must be conserved, that every mile used takes a mile off a car's life—and sooner or later this means an added task for already heavily burdened trains, trolleys and bus lines.



If you don't go—you can find something to cheer for right at home—in the "velvety" goodness of an IMPERIAL highball or Manhattan. For this grand blend is velvet-smooth—it has a mellowness, a genial flavor that you will really enjoy. Ask for IMPERIAL—and taste why it is one of America's most-wanted whiskies.

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*"velvety" for
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Blended whiskey. 86 proof. 70% grain neutral spirits. Hiram Walker & Sons Inc., Peoria, Ill.



convince him that nothing could spoil this love of ours, that I wanted *him* and didn't care a hang what he could give me.

But the worst was still to come. It came in a bundle from San Diego two days later. In the bundle were all the letters I had written Al for two weeks. They were unopened. There was no explanation.

What happened after that seems like a delirious nightmare. I managed to get on a train for Quantico, Va., where my sister Merceda lived. I guess I sobbed all the way. (Both my sisters are married to marines.) Merceda wrote Al a furious note demanding to know if he was trying to break my heart by not even reading my letters. I got her to add this sentence: "When a girl really loves a fellow, she just can't walk out of his life like that!"

Evidently that letter hit him hard, for Al wired back that there must have been a terrible mistake somewhere. Perhaps my letters had gotten mixed up in all the fan mail. The next day I received a swell airmail letter from him, and later a Christmas box containing a silver pin and bracelet and a pink housecoat. In a few days came the best news of all: Al was having himself transferred to the Philadelphia Naval Hospital!

WHEN he stepped off the train he looked wonderful to me: clean-cut, breezy, grinning, just like the old Al. I could hardly tell he was wounded. He laughed when I hugged him and called him darling. He felt my face a while and said, "Yep, the same dame." That was January 19, 1943.

His legs improved rapidly after he reached Philly and some light began seeping through to his remaining eye. He could even distinguish bright colors and moving objects. Soon he could leave the hospital.

We were together a lot after he came back. One day I asked him to feel my ring finger, and said boldly that I still wanted to be his wife whenever he was ready. He grinned, said I should get "A" for persistence, but wouldn't commit himself.

Then in April he heard that a Philly newspaper was giving him a \$1,000 "Hero Award." He rushed around to my place and announced we would be married the next day.

During our wedding at City Hall I kept thinking of the pledge I had just made to love, honor, and cherish Al. It seemed to take on an extra-special meaning when applied to a guy like him. It would be awful, I thought, if I fumbled my job and made him miserable. I thought of the thousands of women who are married to wounded servicemen, and wondered how they were making out.

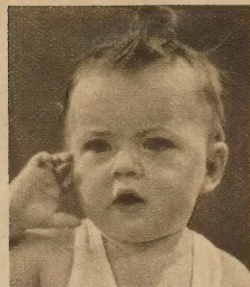
We went to live in my uncle's house, in the Frankford part of Philadelphia, where I had spent most of my life.

I soon found I had a very stubborn husband on my hands.

He was particularly obstinate about his eyesight. I had hoped for his sake that he could see, if only dimly. Soon after we were married, however, darkness began settling back over his eye. For a year there has been no improvement. Today it takes a powerful lamp for him even to see light. Nevertheless, he gets sore whenever anyone tries to interest him in Braille. And he refused to use a Seeing Eye Dog, even though one has been set aside for him. He tells everybody I am his Seeing Eye Dog. Maybe he will get over his prejudice against such crutches, but it will take time.

Al is proud, however, of his glass eye. The first one he had was terrible. Marines at the

If your baby was born after November 1941— please read this



In these first years of your baby's life, his diet is strictly limited.

He must depend on his cereal for many of the elements which grown-ups can get in other foods.

It's natural, therefore, that doctors consider cereal one of the most important foods a baby eats.

And they've devoted a lot of study and research to finding out what grains are the best sources of starch for en-

ergy and protein for tissue-building... which vitamins and minerals are most important... what is the best way of fortifying natural grains with extra nutrients.

So when the Clapp Company decided to make a special baby's cereal, they first consulted a group of leading doctors. And on the basis of medical recommendations, Clapp's Instant Cereal was developed—like this...

Doctors suggested this—

1. "Cereal should introduce a baby to the flavor of natural grains."

2. "Vitamin B₁ and iron may be inadequate in an infant's diet. Provide extra amounts of these nutrients in your cereal."

3. "Natural fortifying substances are preferable to pure chemicals, since they contain extra minerals, proteins, and still other as yet unknown nutrients."

4. "The texture of a baby's cereal should be a definite step in advance from a liquid diet. Make it coarse enough, but *not too coarse!*"

5. "Make a cereal that requires no lengthy preparation. Mothers are busy people!"

6. "Make the price moderate—so all mothers can afford it."

So Clapp's Instant Cereal is made like this—

1. Clapp's Instant Cereal is made of natural whole grains—fine-milled whole wheat, golden cornmeal.

2. In Clapp's Instant Cereal there's 2½ times as much Vitamin B₁, 3 times as much iron as in unfortified home-cooked cereals.

3. Important natural substances such as wheat germ, dry skim milk, and brewers' yeast are used to increase the vitamin and mineral content of Clapp's Instant Cereal.

4. The texture of Clapp's Instant Cereal is granular—easy for a baby's tongue to manage.

5. Clapp's Instant Cereal is *already* cooked. You just add formula or milk right in the serving dish.

6. Clapp's Instant Cereal costs just about a penny a serving!

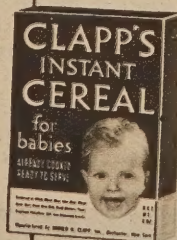
CLAPP'S BABY CEREALS

Ask your doctor!

Every ounce of Clapp's Instant Cereal gives your baby:

Thiamin, 0.3 mg.	Riboflavin, 0.18 mg.
Iron, 6 mg.	Calcium, 96 mg.
Copper, 0.6 mg.	Protein, 4.5 gm.
Carbohydrate, 20.2 gm.	Fat, 0.3 gm.
Calories, 102	Ash, 1.1 gm.

Ask your doctor his opinion of Clapp's Instant Cereal. He'll tell you, we're sure, that you couldn't get a finer cereal for your baby!



hospital razzed him by saying it looked like he came from a dead man. He kidded back, but it really worried him. Now he has a fine, custom-built eye that matches his other, even with the blood vessels. He is always challenging people to tell which is his glass eye. Most people really can't tell.

WHEN Al talks to people he looks right at them. Sometimes it is hard even for me to believe he is not seeing me, because he acts so natural. Of course, he isn't, but I'm terribly glad he doesn't duck his head to hide his eyes, the way many blind people do. Al always tickles him when he learns that people have talked to him without realizing he was blind. It happens almost every day. He doesn't try to fool people; he just acts like he always did. To me that is the most wonderful thing about Al. It has shown me that he isn't licked.

One reason for his lack of self-consciousness, I suspect, is that his cronies have always kidded him about being blind. Frequently friends toss a paper down on Al's lap and say, "Read us the news, Butch." Once Al picked up the paper, pored over it, then slapped his forehead and exclaimed, "Holy catfish! It says here that we're at war!"

Occasionally Butch gets moody when he is alone, but not nearly as often as I feared he would. He likes to mix with people, just as he always did, and he has finagled from me more than his share of nights out with the boys.

Al even enjoys his main job now of going to rallies, conventions, and radio stations—which he does a couple times a week—to give talks on behalf of the Marine Corps, which he is crazy about. Usually I accompany him

as his Seeing Eye Dog. When we go on long trips and pack two suitcases Butch still insists on carrying both bags while we walk to the bus or train. Somehow, it makes me feel proud just to walk down the street with him when he does that!

When we're at home he runs the vacuum sweeper for me, waxes the floors, and does our washing, even to putting the clothes through the wringer without getting his fingers caught. I'd be more touched if I didn't suspect he's more interested in being able to brag that he can do those things than in being a help.

Butch is proudest, though, of the system he has evolved for getting around the house without my help. He has placed clocks at key places, such as at the foot of the stairs, and judges his distances by their noises.

One thing he always shows off to visitors is his big record collection. Slyly he will ask if there is any particular record they would like to hear. When they name one he will walk over matter-of-factly to his cabinet, pull out the record, and put it on the phonograph. All the records are filed away in his mind.

My "General" took charge of our garden plot early in the spring and spaded and raked it under my direction. His favorite pastime now is coon hunting! He goes with a couple of old coon-hunting cronies. They plunge through the woods and wade across creeks after the dogs. The object is to tree the coons before they reach their den tree. Butch hangs on to somebody's arm, unless he gets excited and forgets.

Of course, he falls on his face every few yards and gets some bad cuts and bruises. It usually takes me a half-hour to patch him up afterward.

Al still hasn't decided what he will do when the war is over and he is out of uniform. I've left it entirely up to him.

Every week he's telling me a different scheme. Last week, for example, after someone mentioned that there had been several blind congressmen, he began talking about running for some office. Next week it will be something else. One idea, however, that persistently turns up is that he will buy a farm with the money we've been saving. That appeals to him, because he once was a farm hand and liked it. Of course, he will get a farm near coon-hunting country.

It was funny the way he acted about having a baby. I could see he was dying to have one, but he pretended to be completely opposed to the idea. He said they were too permanent. I wanted a baby by Al more than anything I could think of, and told him so. I finally had my way. Our son was born last June.

I LIKE to look back and think how much happiness our marriage has brought to me. And to Al, too, I hope. Before he came back I feared that any marriage between us would have to be a strained, halfway sort of thing, with both of us deprived of many of the joys a normal marriage provides. That seemed inevitable, and I was willing to accept it if I could only have Al. But it wasn't inevitable. It turned out that our union was complete, rounded, and wonderful.

Al may deny this violently, but I think he is finally getting it through his battered-up head that he has made me the happiest, proudest wife in the world.

THE END ★★

This will never change!

Maybe we'll take our post-war meals in pink and purple pills—maybe we'll swoosh to work in rocket cars . . . maybe so!

But there are a few things that eleven million Americans want to find just as they left them just as they've dreamed about them through these long months. Such as the unchanging love of a girl who waited—such as the magnificent National Parks and playgrounds—are the heritage of every American.

Things will not change—but it's going to be a lot easier to visit and enjoy all the natural wonders of This Amazing America than it was before. Greyhound promises you that.

After Victory look for finer, roomier motor coaches with surprising comfort innovations and special pleasure tours designed to make travel more carefree—for more spacious, better equipped terminals (perhaps with helicopter landing decks!)

Until that time let's put every ounce of energy, every possible war stamp and war bond, on getting the big fight over and won!



GREYHOUND



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